



To: HRRC

Agenda Item #: VIII.

From: Annie Johnson
Staff Liaison

Date: September 24, 2013

Subject: Correspondence and Petitions.

Action ☐

Discussion ☐

Information ☒

Action Requested:
None.

Information / Background:

Correspondence received since the August Human Rights and Relations Commission Meeting.

Attachment:

Correspondence.

Annie Johnson

From: Lisa Schaefer
Sent: Friday, September 13, 2013 4:01 PM
To: Arnold Bigbee
Cc: Annie Johnson
Subject: FW: Unfavorable publicity about Edina

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

Categories: Important!

Arnie:

Would you like to directly respond? We will include this in next month's packet.



Lisa Schaefer, Human Resources Director

952-826-0416 | Fax 952-826-0390

LSchaefer@EdinaMN.gov | www.EdinaMN.gov

...For Living, Learning, Raising Families & Doing Business

From: Lynette Biunno **On Behalf Of** Edina Mail
Sent: Friday, September 13, 2013 3:52 PM
To: Lisa Schaefer
Subject: FW: Unfavorable publicity about Edina

Good morning,

This message has been forwarded to the Mayor and Council members, Scott Neal and Lisa Schaefer.



Lynette Biunno, Receptionist

952-927-8861 | Fax 952-826-0389

lbiunno@EdinaMN.gov | www.EdinaMN.gov

...For Living, Learning, Raising Families & Doing Business

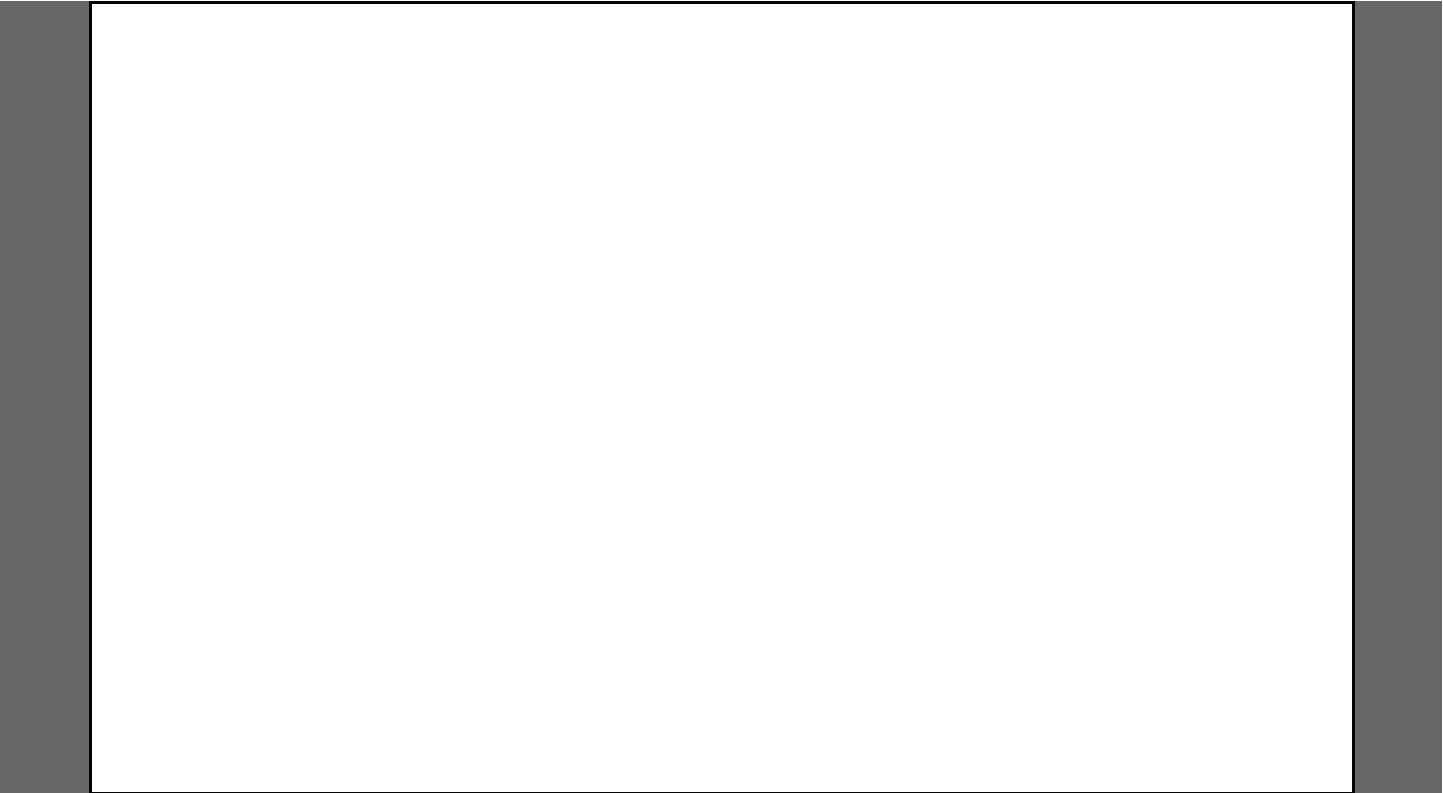
From: Joel Stegner [<mailto:joel.r.stegner@gmail.com>]
Sent: Friday, September 13, 2013 3:39 PM
To: Edina Mail
Subject: Unfavorable publicity about Edina

I'm attaching an article from today's Star Tribune that doesn't reflect well on Edina, although such a thing could and does happen everywhere. I'll make a brief comment at the end of the article.

Shamed in Edina for using food stamps


- Article by: SUE BULGER
- Updated: September 12, 2013 - 8:03 PM

To the irritated lady at the Cub Foods, I should have told you to your face that you were being presumptuous.




[hide](#)



Photo: **Glen Stubbe**, Star Tribune



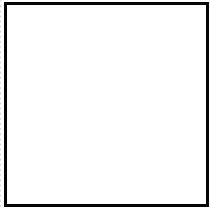
Star Tribune photo galleries



[view larger](#)

- [comments](#)
- 
- 
- [print](#)
- [buy reprints](#)
-
-

resize text



This is an apology to the lady behind me in line at Cub Foods in [Edina](#) on a recent Sunday night. This is also a reminder to me and to others who have ever slipped into believing that we are just a little better than others we encounter.

We were at the checkout, and just as the cashier started ringing me up, I saw you come to the line with a small order in your basket. My first apology is that I could not let you go ahead of me, but the checkout process had already begun.

My second apology was for pulling out my pile of discount coupons for the order, and especially when one required the manager's assistance. I know I was holding you up.

And then I swiped my payment method and you lost your patience. It was EBT — "food stamps."

I did not observe you, but my daughter was with me packing the groceries and saw it all: "EBT: Yeah, right," you muttered, with that look of disgust that would have shattered someone feeling just a little bit of shame over needing food stamps.

As we walked to the car, my daughter told me what had happened, and I sensed her resolve about having made the right decision to work for social justice as she starts her senior year in a social-work program.

We talked about you all the way to the car, and about how sorry we felt for people who were judged because they depended on support from others. But my real apology is that I did not make eye contact with you and get out of the car to talk with you as you got into your car right next to mine.

Instead, I did what many people would do: I felt ashamed and humiliated and angry about your ignorance.

If I'd had the guts to talk with you, I would have told you about my disabled 28-year-old son living with us. We have never asked for public support for him.

But recently we have decided that it is our responsibility to introduce him to the programs that will have to support him when we are no longer here to care for him. We started small: He is eligible for food support, and he agreed to receive it to be able to feel that he is contributing his share to the food bill, since he is unable to work.

I know we looked like people you might think need EBT: a bit unkempt in sweatpants and T-shirts. If I'd had the guts to talk to you, I would have told you that I'd just had an emergency surgery and that my daughter came home from college five hours away to help for the weekend because my husband had scheduled surgery two days after mine. I haven't been able to put on real clothes yet, and I can't lift a bag of groceries.

I thought I could handle your disdain, since I am a professional working at a local corporation where I am surrounded every day by people who respect me and care about me. But it still made me feel a little dirty — unworthy — and I still went home and cried in the privacy of my shower so my family would not know I was hurt by you.

I am sorry I did not tell you all of this in person. What my daughter and I resolved is that we will never let my son (her brother) go to the store alone with his Electronic Benefits Transfer card and be subjected to this humiliation.

We all have our stories, and no one is any better than another. Everyone deserves the respect they want for themselves, even if they use an EBT card to pay for their groceries.

Sue Bulger lives in [Minneapolis](#).

Of course, this story supports the popular notice that Edina residents have an attitude of superiority towards others. While this kind of attitude is commonly expressed by people of different races, as our difficult economy forces more people who are unemployed, underemployed or employed in low wage jobs, a record number of Americans are using food stamps.

There are a lot of people in our society today who have lost patience with the poor, blame them for their poverty and are not supportive of adequate funding for programs such as food assistance. It is clearly most difficult for those who have never directly experienced poverty to really understand what it is all about.

I believe that to the degree that Edina wants to be a advocate of human rights and fair treatment of all people, it needs to help its residents develop a better understanding and more acceptance of the impoverished people who live in our community. Poverty isn't always obvious to people, except when they use public benefits. Given the instability of our employment market and the astronomical costs of healthcare, anyone who experiences job loss or serious illness can quickly be plunged into poverty.

While such an issue you might wish to turf to the Human Rights and Relations Commission, it might be worth some discussion at the level fo the City Council. I also believe that one could easily use your recent Quality of Life survey to determine whether Edina residents who are racial/ethnic minorities or who are showing signs of economic distress are growing in number and might be explaining the somewhat lower overall quality of life scores in the 2013 than the 2011 survey.

Thanks,

Joel Stegner

6312 Cahill Road 1C

Edina, MN 55435

952-843-3440